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English-medium journals in Serbia: Editors' perspectives

Bojana Petrić

1. Introduction

The dominant position of English in international scholarship and increasing pressures on scholars worldwide to publish in English are now well documented (e.g. Belcher 2007; Buckingham 2014; Canagarajah 2002; Curry and Lillis 2004; Ferguson et al. 2011; Flowerdew 1999a, 1999b, 2000; Hamel 2007; Hanauer and Englander 2013; Lillis and Curry 2006, 2010; Uzuner 2008). One of the less explored consequences of this trend is the growth of English-medium journals in non-Anglophone countries. While the extent of Anglicization of periodicals varies across countries and disciplinary areas, with the hard sciences more prone to Anglicization than the humanities, this trend seems to be pervasive, and is ongoing (see, for instance, Gibbs 1995; Lillis 2012; Lillis and Curry 2010; Pérez-Llantada et al. 2011; Swales 1997). As English-medium journals are on the rise, those in local languages seem to be disappearing from the scene as scholars increasingly publish in English rather than in their local languages. For instance, between 1999 and 2006, the numbers of papers in Spanish-language journals published in Spain decreased by half (Pérez-Llantada et al. 2011); similarly, the proportion of medical publications in Italian in the PubMed database fell by 60% between 1986 and 2005, showing 'the gradual peripheralization of Italian' as the

language of medical science (Giannoni 2008, p. 105). Giannoni (2008) also cites data showing that the entire output of Italian researchers in some areas (mathematics, food quality, chemistry) is now published in English, either in international journals or in Italian English-medium journals. As Moreno (2013) half-jokingly stated in a recent conference presentation commenting on the situation in Spain, discourse analysts must act fast if they wish to collect academic papers in local languages while they still exist, especially in hard science and technological areas.

Despite this rapid global shift towards English in scholarly periodicals worldwide, few of the ‘national’ English-medium journals from countries outside the Anglophone centre achieve substantial international visibility, as measured by inclusion in international scientific databases. According to Gibbs (1995), journals from developing¹ countries make up only 2% of all Science Citation Index journals. More recently, Lillis (2012) reported that 93% of the English-medium psychology journals listed in the Social Science Citation Index are published in the Anglophone centre countries (i.e., US and UK). This raises some pertinent questions about the nature of the majority of English-medium journals on the semiperiphery. Is their current status just a temporary stage in their transition from being national to becoming international? Or are they bound to remain of national significance only, despite their use of English and availability online? What kinds of roles do these journals perform in their national contexts and in wider regional and international contexts? More broadly, how should we understand the terms ‘national’ and ‘international’ when describing the status of English-medium periodicals in semiperipheral geopolitical locations? These are some of the questions that motivated the present study of English-medium journals in Serbia, a non-Anglophone country on the semiperiphery of knowledge production, where a similar growth of English-medium journals can be observed. Specifically, the study aims to gain an insight into the nature of English-medium journals on the semiperiphery by investigating the

motivations for these journals' adoption of English and their related goals. These issues will be explored by focusing on the perspectives of these journals' editors, who, in this context, are both shapers of their journals' policies and practices and scholars from the semiperiphery themselves.

The role of editors as gatekeepers and the factors impacting on their selection of articles for publication have long been the subject of research in sociology of science (see, for instance, Crane, 1967), and have more recently come into the focus of scholars working in the field of writing for international publication. McKay (2003), reflecting on her role as editor of *TESOL Quarterly*, outlines three central roles editors play: in their *policy-making* role, editors ensure that policies developed by the editorial board are implemented; in their *decision-making* role, they decide on a number of important parameters of the journal (such as the composition of the editorial board and the selection of manuscript reviewers); finally, they also have a *political* role as they are accountable to the contributors, editorial board members and the body that funds the journal. McKay stresses that although editors do not act alone, they are not unbiased, but actively participate in shaping the nature of the journal, its policies and practices. Because of the importance of these roles, editors' views have been investigated in studies such as Gosden (1992) and Flowerdew (2001), who surveyed editors of prestigious journals in the Anglophone centre countries about their perceptions of and attitudes towards manuscripts submitted to their journals by speakers of English as an additional language. The editors in these studies identified both positive and problematic issues specific to non-centre scholars' submissions. They also showed a sympathetic and supportive attitude towards scholars writing in English as a foreign language and sometimes helped with editing their manuscripts if they felt the research was worthwhile. Thus we see that editors can act as both gatekeepers and literacy brokers (Lillis and Curry 2006). This, however, is not a universal attitude, as shown by Lillis and Curry's (2010) reports of

instances where manuscripts by non-centre scholars, written in L2 English, were treated in a discriminatory manner.

While these studies focused on the editors of centre journals, typically L1 speakers based at prestigious universities in the Anglophone world, the participants in the present study are editors from the semiperiphery, who are themselves speakers of English as an additional language, and whose roles, practices, and attitudes are thus likely to be different. Indeed, the few accounts available in the literature (for example, Lillis' 2012 study of English-medium 'national' journals, and a series of articles and editorials by the editors of the *Croatian Medical Journal*, such as Marušić and Marušić 1999, 2001, 2012; Mišak et al. 2005) show that editors of English-medium journals in non-Anglophone countries may play an important role in supporting scholars from their national research communities. This study, however, does not focus on the *role* of editors; rather, it takes their special position as policy makers, decision makers and political actors (to use McKay's 2003 words) and their insights into the often unwritten decisions and attitudes surrounding editorial language policies as a starting point for an exploration of the nature of English-medium journals in non-Anglophone countries. This chapter therefore does not aim to provide a country profile. The participants have been selected due to their specific role in academic publishing in Serbia, and their views may not be representative of other (or even of the majority of) researchers in Serbia.

Like other contributors to this volume, I use the term 'semiperiphery' with reference to Wallerstein's (2004) world-systems analysis, which distinguishes between three economic-political zones, i.e. the core, semiperiphery and periphery, with semiperiphery displaying features of both core and peripheral zones. The terms are used here to denote geopolitical areas of knowledge production characterized by differential levels of access to material and

symbolic resources and therefore also differential levels of power to define and validate knowledge.

2. Context of the study

As one of the successor states of the former Yugoslavia, Serbia suffered a period of political instability and a severe economic decline during the 1990s wars and eventual disintegration of the former state, which had a considerable effect on the country's research infrastructure and community. Like Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania, Serbia has a 'semi-developed science system' (Radošević 2010, p.183), characterized by poor support for scientific research.

Serbian gross domestic expenditure on research and development (GERD) is less than 1% of its GDP, and although it increased from 0.3% in 2000 to 0.92% in 2011 (Radošević 2010), it is still far below the EU average of 2.03%. Among the many challenges facing Serbian science is the 'massive and continuous brain drain' (Dall 2007, p. 169), with Serbia ranked 141st for brain drain out of 144 countries analysed in the latest report on global competitiveness (Schwab 2012). It is not surprising, then, that the number of researchers (around 10,000, according to Kutlača 2007) has remained almost constant during the first decade of the 21st century.

Nevertheless, despite the slow process of recovery of the once reasonably developed science system that existed in the former Yugoslavia, there is a trend towards greater internationalization of science in Serbia, understood as the greater participation of Serbian researchers in projects, conferences and publications beyond the national borders, inevitably

accompanied by a growing need for and use of English. Participation in researchers' informal networks (cf. Curry and Lillis 2010) as well as in official projects, such as UNESCO's Venice Process, launched in 2001, and the inclusion of Serbia in the European Union's 7th Framework Programme for Research and Development in 2007, have opened up opportunities for researchers in Serbia for greater international cooperation and better funding for research projects, leading to a rise in the numbers of papers authored by researchers from Serbia in international peer-reviewed journals (for instance, between 2002 and 2008 their numbers rose by 172.1%; for further information see Radošević 2010).

Internally, the Ministry of Science and Technological Development² has implemented policies that have also contributed to the increased need for English, such as the point system for evaluating scholars' research outputs which, as is common elsewhere (see, for example, Burgess and Uysal, this volume; also Lillis and Curry 2010), rewards scholars who publish in international, typically English-medium, journals on SCI and SSCI lists. Of particular relevance to this study are governmental measures relating to journal editing in Serbia, such as the *Act on Editing Journals*³ (2009), which recommends that journals should use Serbian⁴, English, or both languages as their medium; that all journal articles should be accompanied by abstracts in English; and that journals publishing articles in Serbian only should also include extensive English summaries. Journals are ranked annually by disciplinary⁵ panels of experts, and are classified into one of the following five categories: 1) international journal published in Serbia; 2) national journal of international importance; 3) leading national journal; 4) journal of national importance; and 5) scholarly journal. The rankings have implications for funding and other benefits. Needless to say, journals in the first two categories must use English in order to be able to reach an international readership, although, technically, English is not a prerequisite for a journal to be included in the SCI list.

Given these external and internal factors, it is not surprising that an increasing number of journals in Serbia have started to use English as their medium. It is not uncommon to find the following in the guidelines for authors in journals publishing articles in both English and Serbian: “The Editorial Board give absolute priority to submissions written in English” (from a social science journal) or “Manuscripts submitted entirely in English have a priority in publication” (from a medical journal). This shows that the language of publication alone may increase its author’s chances to get published in local journals.

In terms of the extent of Anglicization, journals in Serbia can be grouped into the following four categories: 1) Serbian-medium journals, where all content (excluding abstracts) is in Serbian only; 2) mixed-language journals, where some articles are in English while others are in Serbian (but no article appears in both languages); 3) bilingual journals, where all content is published in both English and Serbian; and 4) English-medium journals, where all content (excluding abstracts) is in English only. Of these categories, only the latter is steadily increasing, driven both by newly founded English-medium journals and by growing numbers of formerly bilingual, mixed-language or Serbian-only journals switching to English as their only medium. Specifically, between 2006 and 2009 the proportion of English-medium journals rose from less than a quarter (23.9%) to almost a third (31.9%) of all journals published in Serbia⁶. In contrast, in the same period the proportions of Serbian only and mixed-language journals fell from 31.8% to 26.8%, and from 47.3% to 41.3%, respectively.

As elsewhere (see, for instance, Giannoni 2008), this trend is marked by considerable disciplinary variation, with the highest proportion of English-medium journals in the hard sciences and mathematics, and the lowest in the social sciences and humanities. With reference to Becher and Trowler’s (2001) taxonomy of disciplines, which combines the distinction between hard and soft disciplines on the one hand and pure and applied on the

other, in 2009, 84% of all journals in hard-pure (e.g., chemistry, mathematics) and hard-applied disciplines (e.g., engineering) were English-medium, in contrast to 23% of soft-applied (e.g., education studies) and 9% of soft-pure (i.e., humanities) journals. The figures also reflect the fact that the most active parts of the Serbian science system are in hard-pure and hard-applied disciplines, particularly clinical medicine, chemistry, engineering/technology, and physics (Radošević 2010).

However, despite this shift towards using English as the main medium of publication, only 16 per cent of these journals were classified as ‘international’ by the local research authorities at the beginning of the 2010s. It is therefore particularly interesting to explore the goals and functions of the majority of English-medium journals in Serbia that are not ranked as international.

3. Methodology

3.1 Identifying and selecting English-medium journals published in Serbia

In the first stage of the research, bibliometric data were used to identify and select English-medium journals published in Serbia whose editors could then be invited to participate in the study. The main criteria for journal selection were that the journal was English-medium, bilingual, or mixed-language, and that it was edited and published in Serbia. A list of all locally published English-medium and mixed-language journals was compiled from the data available in the Serbian Citation Index database and the *Journal Bibliometric Report*,⁷ totalling 81 regularly published journals. After eliminating journals whose editors’ contact details were not available online, 35 editors of English-medium journals were contacted by email and invited to participate in the study. The selection was made following the principle

of maximum variation sampling (Miles and Huberman 1994) so as to include as diverse a range of journals as possible in terms of disciplinary areas (using Becher and Trowler's 2001 classification), the size of the university centre with which the journal is affiliated, the journal's lifespan, and – of particular importance to this study—length of use of the English medium.

Of the 35 editors contacted, 19 (67 per cent) initially agreed; however, four dropped out at a later stage due to other commitments; thus the final number of informants was 15. The intended diversity of journals in the sample was achieved along a number of dimensions: in terms of their lifespan (with journal launch dates ranging from 1955 to 2007); the length of time in which English had been used as their medium (some were English-medium from the beginning while others recently switched to English); and the balance of articles by local vs. non-local authors. The journals were based in five different geographical locations, including both major universities and smaller research centres. In terms of disciplinary areas represented, the majority of the journals were from hard-applied disciplines (8), followed by soft-applied (4) and hard-pure (2), with none from the soft-pure (i.e., humanities), which is in line with the proportions of English-medium journals in these areas, as explained above. In terms of journal rankings, the sample included journals from all categories, with the majority occupying categories 3 (leading national journal) and 4 (journal of national importance) according to the 2010 report.⁸

3.2 Data collection and analysis

To elicit the editors' perspectives on the issues of interest to the study, a set of open-ended questions was developed, which was used as a basis for face-to-face interviews (with five

informants) and for email correspondence (with ten informants that were not available for face-to-face interviews). The schedule consisted of general and journal-specific questions, with the former covering issues such as: the journal's aims and motivations for using English; their intended readership; the editor's perception of the nature of their journal; their attitudes towards the role of English and Serbian in academic publishing in their discipline; the difficulties of editing an English-medium journal in a non-Anglophone country, and the strategies editors use to overcome them. The journal-specific questions, which were developed after examining each journal in detail, concerned the journal's history, ranking, proportions of articles authored by local vs. other scholars, language-related guidelines and support for authors (if any), use of English in the editor's discipline and other relevant issues (e.g., reasons motivating the change in the journal's title). Both the interviews and the email correspondence were in Serbian, the language shared by the researcher and the interviewees (for an English translation of a sample schedule, see Appendix).

Although in both cases a similar range of topics was covered, the difference in the format resulted in differences in the amount and quality of data obtained. The interviews were semi-structured (Patton 2002), which enabled me to probe into the issues under discussion in more depth and allowed the participants to introduce topics they found relevant, resulting in richer and more varied data. Additionally, visiting the informants' offices and institutions to conduct the interviews provided further information about the context in which they work and their work routines. Nevertheless, the data obtained via email were also useful, as the editors answered the questions with precision and in varying degrees of detail, in some cases providing further information, which showed their interest in this topic⁹. A further indication of their willingness to participate can be seen in the fact that there were no instances of unanswered questions, even though all questions were open-ended, thus requiring time and effort.

Interviews were transcribed and coded together with emailed data for the following major themes: goals and motivations for using English; editors' views on the nature of their journal (national/international); attitudes towards publishing in English and Serbian; difficulties of journal editing in a non-Anglophone country, and strategies to overcome these difficulties. This paper reports on the first two topics only due to space limitations.

3.3 Research ethics

As this study concerns a relatively small academic community, special care was taken to protect the identity of the participants, particularly since the editors are quite prominent figures in their disciplinary communities. Although all gave consent for the information to be used for research purposes, I was aware of the sensitive nature of it, especially when it involved other individuals and bodies. Lillis (2012) faced a similar difficulty when reporting data from a study of four journals in the same discipline in four different countries, and maintained the anonymity of the editors by unlinking interview excerpts from descriptions of the journals' profiles. Following this, I will unlink the individuals' accounts from the universities, locations, and disciplinary areas of the journals they edit. Editors will be referred to by codes (e.g., E1, E2), with no further personal information provided. In cases where the journal's discipline is specified, the code will not be provided as this may reveal the informant's identity. If the disciplinary area is extremely specific, a more general disciplinary label will be used. This will both minimize the risk of data loss and maintain the participants' anonymity.

4. Findings and discussion

Using mostly interview data, supported by bibliometric information where relevant, two major themes will be discussed: editors' perceptions of the goals and motivations for their journals' adoption of English as their medium; and their views on the nature of their journal.

4.1 Why English?

A survey of points during the journals' lifespans when they switched to English shows that all journals launched after 1990 (a total of 11, with six launched in the 1990s and five in the 2000s) have used English from the beginning, with only one starting as a bilingual Serbian-English publication. Of the four journals established prior to 1990, two used to be Serbian-only but switched to English in the 2000s, one has been English-only from the beginning, and one initially accepted articles in English in addition to French, German, Russian and Serbian, but in the 1980s adopted English as its only medium. Journals starting off as English-medium tended to choose English titles from the beginning, while those switching to English later adopted an English title either by translating the original title from Serbian or by introducing a new title in English, Latin or Greek.

Most editors cited multiple motivations for using English as the language medium of their journals. The use of English is intended to achieve certain goals, some of which are related to the international sphere, while others are aimed at the local context.

4.1.1 Reaching beyond the national context

For most editors, the main goal of publishing the journal in English is to ‘foster international scholarly exchange’, a phrase repeatedly used by many participants. However, the editors differed in terms of which aspect of exchange they emphasized as the most desirable. For some, the primary goal is to promote the work of Serbian scholars beyond the national borders; for others it is primarily exchange in the opposite direction, i.e., enabling knowledge flows from the international circles towards the Serbian research community; still others aim for bi-directional exchange.

Most editors strongly believe that English-medium journals are an excellent vehicle for presenting research by Serbian scholars to an international audience, especially if they are also open-access and available online, even if they are not included in SCI/SSCI lists. Editors whose journals recently switched to English describe the positive outcomes in terms of ‘expanding the readership’ of their journals and creating ‘greater opportunities for being cited’ (E10) for Serbian researchers. Some editors keep track of the geographical locations of their journals’ readership using Google Analytics tools, which allow them to check the number of viewings and downloads of the journal’s content by country. E9, for instance, shared data showing that, in the month before our correspondence, only 7% of his online-only journal’s readers were from Serbia, with the majority based in the US and various European countries. He also noted an interesting pattern among the journal users: in the preceding three months, papers by foreign authors published in his journal were viewed almost twice as often as papers by local authors; however, papers by local authors were 25 per cent more likely to be downloaded, suggesting that while papers by Serbian authors were less likely to be browsed, those that did attract readers’ initial attention had a higher likelihood of actually being downloaded and possibly read. According to the editor’s data, then, the presence of foreign authors in the journal increased the likelihood of papers by local

researchers getting noticed. Editors also provided examples of the work of Serbian authors published in their journals cited by foreign authors publishing in English-medium journals in other countries, using information provided by the national library. Some editors, such as E8, received requests for permissions to include papers by Serbian scholars published in her journal in international collected volumes. These examples show that the journals' goals related to the promotion of Serbian scholarship are, in many cases, being fulfilled, although most editors expressed hopes for further developments in this direction.

While greater exposure of Serbian scholars' work to a wider international readership is seen as an important function of English-medium journals by most editors, some explained their journal's use of English specifically in terms of making articles by international scholars accessible to the local readership. This function of English-medium journals is particularly important in a country whose institutions have subscriptions to a limited number of publications (as also noted by Lillis and Curry 2010, for other contexts); as E14 describes it, 'most of our researchers do not always have access to the latest publications'. However, even where access is not an issue, as E1 points out, local English-medium journals play a role in bringing to the attention of the local community work which uses theoretical frameworks or research methodologies with no or little presence in the local research tradition, which is particularly relevant in some social science disciplines. As E1 states, one of the goals of his journal is 'to free [his discipline] from the remnants of socialist-era dictates' by encouraging the use of more diverse and up-to-date research frameworks.

Another motivation for using English is to create a top-quality journal and promote it internationally; as E4 explains, 'to enable the journal to be visible outside the local context, to be cited in relevant journals and to find its place in the world scientific literature'. While English is seen as a necessary prerequisite for this goal, editors are aware that 'it is not sufficient to publish in English to become a well-known and well-respected journal' (E4),

and that ‘the quality of published articles is more important than the language [in which they are published]’ (E11). E14 also points to the importance of the journal being indexed in prestigious databases, which ‘in theory don’t require the use of English but in practice English is necessary’. Most editors see the inclusion in the SCI/SSCI list as the yardstick of recognition of the journal’s quality; therefore, reference to Thompson Reuters’ criteria and procedures was frequently made. Although a few editors challenged the objectivity of the impact factor and other bibliometric measures of journal quality, the majority view this procedure as fair and objective, which is in some cases seen as a contrast to the local authority’s evaluation system.

Finally, creating a unique journal was a goal mentioned by the editors of three journals covering inter/transdisciplinary areas, where English is necessary as the communities of scholars in these areas are small and geographically dispersed. One of these editors explains that his journal is currently the only one in the world to cover the particular combination of disciplines in his research area; hence it is not surprising that papers in this journal are authored by researchers from across the globe. By finding a niche area at the intersection of several disciplines that are brought together in a novel way, these journals are illustrative of the semiperiphery’s greater freedom for experimentation and openness to ‘fringe’ topics, something that mainstream centre journals cannot always afford (see Introduction to this volume).

4.1.2 Goals in the local context

The use of English was also motivated by goals related to the local context, at both national and institutional levels, revealing some important functions of these journals in the local

environment. The cases below show that local factors may be a crucial driver of the journals' use of English.

While many editors referred to the Ministry's journal evaluation system (some welcoming while others criticising its criteria and procedures), in one case, it was identified as the main factor behind the journal's move towards English, aimed at improving the journal's ranking in the Ministry's evaluation table. The editor of this journal was ambivalent about the shift towards English, although he was instrumental in setting up the necessary procedures. On the one hand, he welcomed the move and described some of the positive outcomes of switching to English, such as the increased regional exchange and the fact that the journal was under consideration for inclusion in the SCI list. On the other hand, he resented the assumption (which he perceived was behind the Ministry's evaluation criteria) that publications in the local language are by definition inferior to those in English. Commenting on the previous issues of his journal, launched in the 1950s, he pointed to the arbitrary nature of such evaluation: 'Is this not science because it's not in English?' adding that 'if it weren't, it wouldn't be considered by Thompson [for inclusion in the SCI list]'. This example shows the complexity of attitudes surrounding language policies but also the powerful effect of local 'push' factors, in this case the evaluation regime awarding governmental funding to top journals.

English-medium journals may also be used as a vehicle for fulfilling the institutional goals of the journals' funding body. One of the editors explains that his journal was launched as a result of a departmental decision with the aim of raising the department's profile in the national context and creating a space for its staff to develop a track record of international publications necessary for promotion. Publishing an international journal was also intended to support the department's application for accreditation of its newly established doctoral

programme. Although the journal also aimed to foster international exchange, the primary motivation behind its language policies was to achieve institutional goals in the local context.

Finally, local readers' and authors' perceived needs also featured as a factor in deciding on the language policy of the journal. The editor of the only bilingual journal in the sample explained that both languages were needed because the journal's intended readership included both researchers and practitioners. The Serbian version was seen as necessary to reach the practitioners, most of whom were not proficient enough to read an English-only publication; however, this was only a temporary measure in order to 'educate the practitioners' and prepare them for reading professional literature in English as the journal planned to switch to the English-only version in a year's time in order to avoid high translation costs. The editor stressed that ultimately the practitioners in the field 'must understand that English is essential for professional development'. Several other editors also mentioned that one of their journals' aims was to raise standards of journal publishing in Serbia through measures such as rigorous peer review procedures involving reviewers from other countries, which was perceived as a break with the practices of some poor quality local L1 journals (cf. Salager-Meyer 2008). At the same time, many of the editors described their efforts to help local authors publish in English, with some editing manuscripts themselves if they felt there was potential for a good contribution. Support for local authors was also offered on some of the journals' websites, through features such as a 'model' research paper and detailed guidelines for authors. Some editors point to the educational role of 'local, easily accessible journals, to encourage junior scholars to read and write better' (E8). These measures, reminiscent of the extensive support for local scholars offered by the *Croatian Medical Journal* (Marušić and Marušić 1999, 2001, 2012 and this volume; Mišak et al. 2005) and also identified by Lillis (2012), show that English-medium journals on the semiperiphery have an educational role as well, helping local authors develop skills needed for publishing in

English. However, the supportive role these journals perform may be perceived as conflicting with the goal to achieve and/or maintain high standards, with some editors seeing support as a temporary measure only, and others – primarily those concerned with creating a high quality journal - rejecting the notion that journals need to help local authors altogether.

As can be seen, the journals' use of the medium of English is motivated by a complex combination of locally and globally oriented goals, which are not mutually exclusive but are not necessarily congruent either. Rather, they simultaneously operate at different levels: while English is primarily used as a tool for reaching beyond the national boundaries, it is also intended to serve local purposes. Drawing on Blommaert's (2005) take on world system analysis, the multiple functions of English in academic publishing on the semiperiphery can be seen as a result of the position these journals occupy vis-à-vis the centring institutions to which they orient, i.e. the Anglophone centre on the one hand, and the national research authority on the other, and their overlapping yet distinct value attribution regimes. The goals of these journals, as described by their editors, show that many are oriented towards the Anglophone centre and its institutions such as Thompson Reuters, which Lillis (2012) describes as the effect of a centripetal force. At the same time, we have seen that some of these journals aim to function, as Lillis (2012) describes it, 'as a centrifugal force by opening up intellectual spaces that are often not available in either English-medium centre journals or longstanding journals in local languages' (p.716). Still others have important roles in a more narrowly defined local context, where English is primarily used due to its ability to index 'international'; hence 'top-quality' (Lillis and Curry 2010), needed for institutional purposes. In all these cases, English is perceived as necessary or helpful tool for reaching the journal's goals. Editors differ in their perspectives about whether these forces are 'pull' or 'push' factors. Some editors foreground the pressures to adopt English as their publication medium, with journals forced to switch to English in order to avoid marginalization even within the

national context. Such push factors are typically evident in the case of journals with a long tradition of publishing in the local language, which have recently had to switch to English. In some cases both pressures and opportunities surface as motifs in the editors' accounts. Overall, however, pull factors seem to feature more strongly, with the majority of editors perceiving the use of English as a vehicle for opening up new opportunities and fulfilling goals both locally and beyond.

In sum, the findings suggests that English-medium journals on the semiperiphery are located at the intersection of conflicting centripetal and centrifugal forces, a position fraught with possible tensions. This is particularly evident in the accounts of editors of journals in applied fields, which cater for both researchers and practitioners. At the other end of the spectrum, however, are editors of journals in hard-pure sciences, where publishing in English has long become standard practice; as one of the editors states, 'simply, nothing is written in Serbian any longer' in her field. In these cases, the language medium is not a matter of choice, and the use of English is so normalized that even my question of 'why English?' seemed superfluous.

4.2 The nature of English-medium journals on the semiperiphery

Bibliometric data show that the journals in the sample vary widely in terms of the national affiliations and geographical locations of their published authors. While some publish mainly papers by local authors, others publish almost exclusively papers by non-local authors (although the latter are fewer in number). In between are journals with varying proportions of articles by local and non-local authors. However, while 'local' can be easily defined as researchers affiliated with institutions in Serbia, 'non-local' is a rather heterogeneous

category, including authors from ex-Yugoslav countries (who not long ago were part of the same local context), other neighbouring countries, other semiperipheral countries as well as the countries of the Anglophone centre. To add to the complexity, some of the authors located in centre countries are originally from Serbia, therefore formerly (and perhaps still to some extent) ‘local’ authors. Clearly, bibliometric data alone are not a reliable indicator of the scope and nature of English-medium journals in non-Anglophone contexts.

The editors’ perceptions show a seemingly more homogenous perspective, as all but three editors chose ‘international’ as the best descriptor of the nature of their journal, quoting evidence such as the fact that the journal’s authors, readers and editorial boards include academics from a range of countries and, in some cases, that the journal is included in international databases. Of the three remaining editors, one opted for ‘regionally international’ (E11) as his journal serves primarily as a vehicle of knowledge exchange in the Balkan region, another for a mixture of labels, describing his journal as ‘50% national, 30% regional and 20% international’ (E12), while the third considers his journal ‘transnational’, which he also saw as one of the features of science (E9). None of the editors qualified their journal as ‘national’, and those whose journals were ranked as ‘leading national’ by the Ministry tended to disagree with this classification, pointing to problems in the criteria and procedures, such as perceived bias against journals affiliated with institutions located outside of the capital and against marginalized research areas within core disciplines.

However, further analysis revealed some ambiguity behind the editors’ use of the term ‘international’. First, being international is implied to be a process; therefore also a matter of degree. For instance, some of the editors who qualified their journal as international described the future goals for the journal as ‘greater internationalization’ (E6), achieving ‘a higher proportion of papers by foreign scholars’ (E12), or ‘becoming more international’ (E8). In other words, ‘international’ tends to be perceived as a gradable, dynamic, and

measurable quality. Secondly, while a few editors spoke of ‘international’ as involving exchange specifically with ‘the countries of the Anglo-Saxon area’ (E10), i.e. the countries of the Western core, this was not a uniform, nor even the majority view. For many, what is important is that the journal is not restricted to the local research community, and is instead open to knowledge flows to and from areas beyond the national borders.

Several editors emphasized the regional context as the most relevant for their journal; however, even ‘regional’ was defined in diverse ways, with some focusing on the ex-Yugoslav area, others on the Balkans, still others on Central European or Eastern European countries. The regional aspect was perceived as particularly important in disciplines dealing with topics related to the shared cultural and historical space or common geographical and climatic features. The editor of an agricultural journal gives an example of his own research paper on a local breed of pig, which was rejected by a US journal due to, as the reviewers phrased it, the topic’s lack of interest for the journal’s readership; yet the topic was important to the regional research community. The knowledge flows, however, can be established with other, geographically remote, semiperipheral regions as well, based on a shared interest. For instance, one of the editors in economics gives bibliometric evidence of increased knowledge exchange with South American research communities on topics of relevance to similar economies. This is similar to the *Croatian Medical Journal*’s strategy of publishing articles from developing countries on topics of joint interest, aiming ‘to serve as a bridge between mainstream science and the scientific periphery’ (Mišak et al. 2005, p.123). Thus, English-medium journals on the semiperiphery have an important role to play in showcasing research of interest in the regional and semiperipheral context, which may be rejected as ‘parochial’ (see Flowerdew 2001) by centre journals.

While it may be tempting to replace the problematic national/international binary by a more fine-grained continuum (national-regional-international), these all remain contested

terms in the context of academic publishing, as shown above and in previous literature. Lillis and Curry (2010), for instance, refer to ‘international’ as a ‘sliding signifier’ which is ‘often used as a proxy for “English medium”’ (p.6) and, drawing on bibliometric studies, suggest the term ‘internationality’ instead, while Lillis (2012) tellingly uses inverted commas when referring to English-medium ‘national’ journals, questioning this status. Hamel (2007) also points to the blurring boundaries between the national and international spheres of academic publishing. Clearly, ‘national’ and ‘international’ cannot adequately describe the scope and the nature of English-medium journals in non-Anglophone countries.

The complexity surrounding the issues of location, scope and nature of these journals is aptly illustrated by a segment from the interview with E1, who received an offer from a prestigious international publisher to take over his journal, which at the time of the study was being monitored by Thompson Reuters for inclusion in the SSCI list. The editor did not accept the offer, explaining ‘I want the journal to be from Serbia’. Yet one of the important goals of the journal for him is, as he calls it, ‘de-ghettoization’ of Serbian scholars in his discipline, and he emphatically states that research and publishing ‘should not be local’. The seeming contradiction in this politics of location can be explained with reference to the notion of translocality (for a recent critical review, see Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013), a perspective used to explain phenomena of interconnectedness not restricted to national boundaries. The translocality framework offers concepts that can be fruitfully applied to the study of English-medium journals on the semiperiphery, such as local-to-local flows and relations (for instance, the South American economists publishing in a Serbian journal, as shown above); the importance of locality (shown in E1’s firm decision to keep the journal locally based); and connectedness, networks and transfer (unanimously perceived as important goals of these journals by all editors in this study).

Considering English-medium journals on the semiperiphery as a *translocal* phenomenon thus helps accommodate both their rootedness in the local (institutional and national) context and their ability to open up spaces for knowledge flows connecting the local context both with other localities and with higher-than-local levels. While such spaces are in some cases created as a result of internal and external pressures, they may also play an emancipatory role in the local community, offering local scholars a more supportive environment than English-medium journals in the centre and an opportunity to publish in ‘locally international’ journals as a stepping stone to publishing in more high-stakes journals. We can also see that while the ‘international’ dimension is seen as an important overarching goal of these journals and the yardstick against which to measure their quality and development, the local is of equal significance: on the one hand, it is a source of affordances and constraints that shape the journals’ practices (such as the local research authorities’ regulations); on the other, it provides a motivation and an arena for the journals’ goal-oriented activities (such as increasing the standards of publishing in the local research community). Their translocal nature, that is, the fact that they are not restricted to the local context, which is enabled by the use of English, contributes, in turn, to the fulfilment of their goals in the local context. In other words, the more successful they are in developing local-to-local and local-to-higher-than-local knowledge flows, the more valuable they will be perceived to be in the local context.

5. Conclusion

This study has explored the growing phenomenon of English-medium journals on the semiperiphery by investigating the perceptions of editors of English-medium journals in

Serbia. This phenomenon is relatively recent and marks a new development in small research communities. While scholars from ‘small’ language backgrounds have always had to write in a foreign language in order to reach a wider international audience, what is new is that increasingly the option to publish in the local language is disappearing due to decreasing numbers of periodicals in the local language and the growing pressures on scholars to publish in English. Instead, the choice is increasingly between publishing in local or centre-affiliated English-medium journals.

The findings of this study lead to several interrelated conclusions. First, English-medium journals in Serbia, and quite possibly in other non-Anglophone countries, constitute a diverse category, with different histories, goals, and practices related to the use of English. This variation is due to a range of factors, including disciplinary differences, institutional affiliations, and personal editorial styles. While this study has identified general patterns, future research should investigate specific groups of journals in more depth and explore the factors that impact on their policies and practices.

Second, it is shown that these journals use English in order to achieve a variety of goals at different levels, from local institutional goals to the goals at the international level. As the journals operate in a polycentric environment, and are oriented towards centring institutions at both local and higher-than-local levels, tensions may occur as a result of conflicting goals and priorities. Importantly, however, English-medium publishing is seen as a necessary although not sufficient condition for achieving these goals. Journals in hard-pure disciplines are a special case in this regard, as the editors in these disciplines do not perceive English as adding to the value of the journal; its use in these disciplines is normalized to such an extent that publishing in the local language is seen as impractical.

Third, I have argued that English-medium journals on the semiperiphery should be considered as a *translocal* phenomenon due to the knowledge flows they enable between

different local contexts as well as with higher-than-local levels. The translocal perspective also accommodates the firm ties these journals have to their localities and the affordances and constraints on their practices arising from the local context. Importantly, this perspective allows a way out of the local/global and national/international binaries and places emphasis on activity at levels in between, showing that English-medium journals on the semiperiphery serve important functions in a continuum of contexts.

There are many issues raised by the findings of this study that are worth pursuing further, of which I will select two as particularly pertinent. One concerns the use of English in these journals and the question of whether it should be seen as a sign of oppression and inequality or empowerment through appropriation of a language resource for one's own purposes. It is useful to quote Blommaert (2005) here: 'What happens to resources such as English, their value and identity-articulating potential in one place is not necessarily predictable from what happens to them elsewhere' (p.211). Hence, to answer this question, further research is needed, focusing on the attitudes and practices of English-medium journals' readers and authors, to understand what the use of English does to them (echoing Blommaert's question about what language does to people) and what they are able to do with and in it.

The second question raised by this and similar studies is how to understand the role that English-medium journals on the semiperiphery play in global academic publishing. As we know from the world system analysis literature (Wallerstein 2004), it is typically the centre that has direct communication channels to various semiperipheral and peripheral zones for economic and other flows, while connections among different semiperipheries are less common, as semiperipheries tend to orient to the centre. This study has shown that some English-medium journals are able to and have an interest in forging links and exchanging knowledge with other semiperipheries in addition to with the centre. Are English-medium

journals such as these opening up a space for new routes of knowledge flows? If so, what processes of knowledge validation and circulation are involved? Or is this a temporary phenomenon bound to disappear as a result of increasing pressures to publish in centre journals only? More broadly, should a parallel be drawn to how the semiperiphery is seen in economic terms as a factor that stabilizes the world system (Wallerstein 2004) and should we similarly regard English-medium journals on the semiperiphery as a balancing factor in global academic publishing? Or does this phenomenon play a different, yet undefined, role? Future research is needed to answer these and other questions arising from the dynamic landscape of academic publishing in the 21st century.

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Appendix

Sample interview schedule

[Journal title] has been recently launched, and from the start it has used English as its medium. Can you tell me about the reasons for this decision?

What conditions were necessary for this to be made possible?

To what extent have the goals that motivated the decision to publish in English been achieved?

Can you tell me something about the readership of the journal? To what extent does the readership consist of scholars/users from Serbia, the ex-Yugoslav/Southeast European region, or a broader range of countries?

Some have expressed concerns about journals in English being inaccessible to scholars in Serbia who don't speak English well enough. What is your opinion about this?

According to the Ministry's report on the ranking of journals for last year, [title of journal] is ranked [x]. Can you comment on this, please? Are you satisfied with this ranking? What are the implications of this ranking for the journal (e.g. for funding, for the journal's appeal as a potential outlet to other academics)?

Regardless of the ranking, how do you see the journal, as national, regional, international, transnational or something else?

According to the latest bibliometric report, [title of journal] has published [%] of articles by international authors. Are you satisfied with the proportions of articles authored by local and foreign authors? How has the journal managed to attract the attention of international academics in the short span of time since its launch?

In your opinion, what are the benefits of publishing articles by foreign authors in the journal you edit?

Are there any indications that the works by Serbian authors published in the journal have attracted the attention of international readers since they are published in English and are available online?

From your experience, are Serbian researchers facing more difficulties when preparing manuscripts in English? If so, what particular difficulties? Do you know of authors not submitting manuscripts to English-medium journals because of their lack of English knowledge or English writing skills?

How does the journal address this issue? Does the journal offer support? Do you see this as a role of the journal or some other body or the authors themselves?

What difficulties do you face as an editor of an English-medium journal in a non-Anglophone country? (prompts: communicating with authors from a range of countries, selection of

reviewers, members of the editorial board, text editing and proof-reading). How do you deal with these difficulties?

How would you characterize the nature of the journal, given its readership and users: as a national, international, regional, transnational or something else? How do you see the journal in 5 or 10 years' time in that respect?

What is your opinion of the fact that a growing number of journals is switching to use English as its main medium of publication?

What is the future of scholarship in Serbian and other 'small' languages?

Is there anything else you would like to comment on in relation to the themes we have discussed?

Notes

¹ Gibbs' (1995) use of the term 'developing' is based on indices of economic development. While 'developing' is likely to overlap with 'semiperipheral' in most cases, it should be borne in mind that the two terms are not identical. For instance, Giannoni (2008) uses 'peripheral' when referring to knowledge production and academic publishing in Italy; however, based on economic criteria, Italy belongs to developed, rather than developing countries.

² Due to the recent restructuring of the government, the Ministry is now called Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development.

³ Available at <http://www.mpn.gov.rs>

⁴ I use 'Serbian' for convenience, although the language is Serbo-Croatian (see, for instance, Kordić 2010).

⁵ The number of disciplinary areas has risen from 17 in 2009 to 22 in 2013. A journal can be assessed within more than one area, as is the case with interdisciplinary journals.

⁶ Data about journals published in Serbia used in this study were compiled from the Serbian citation index database (www.scindex.ceon.rs), which indexes locally published academic journals, and the annually published *Journal Bibliometric Report*, which provides various scientometric analyses of Serbian journals. Both are provided by the Center for Evaluation in Education and Science (CEES), a non-governmental, non-for-profit organization promoting “open, data-driven, and permanent evaluation of academic entities of Serbia” (www.ceon.rs).

⁷ See note 6.

⁸ See note 2.

⁹ It should be acknowledged that this is a self-selected group, as the informants were among those who responded to my email.